

Leonard Strydom

THE BASICS OF BAPTISM

A CRUCIAL STEP OF OBEDIENCE



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by Leonard Strydom

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INTRODUCTION

BAPTISM IS A BIG DEAL

If you pick up your Bible and start reading through the New Testament, you'll quickly realise that God sees being baptised as incredibly important.

If it's important to God, then it should be important to us too. But why? And when should we get baptised? By whom? And how does it work? If you've been baptised as an infant, does that count? If you've ever wondered about any of these questions, or if you're a new Christian, I hope to help you understand the significance of this big step in your Christian walk.

This booklet will be full of Bible verses - that's intentional. Please don't skip over them. They are the most crucial parts of what you are about to read. I want you, as a follower of God, to form a Biblical conviction about this important matter.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

CHAPTER 1

THE THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM

To understand baptism, we first need to understand salvation, and to understand salvation, we first need to understand repentance.

Repentance

The word “repent” (*metanoia* in Greek) literally means to turn around and walk in the other direction. It’s a word you’ll find often as you read through the New Testament, especially when Jesus speaks. It’s interesting that when Jesus walked on earth, He used this word “repent” to sum up His main message again and again. He preached that people should repent and believe in Him. It’s clear that Jesus is calling every person to turn away from a life lived for their own gain and turn towards a life lived fully for Him.

And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:31-32 (ESV)

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:37-38 (NIV)

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

Salvation

Repentance and salvation walk hand in hand. It is in turning away from our sinful lives and turning towards God that our sins are forgiven and we receive the gift of salvation - repentance brings salvation. This is incredible news! We can be forgiven and made right in God’s eyes. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and He died the death we should have died.

Now we can be saved from eternal destruction and instead receive eternal life. No wonder the Bible calls this the “Gospel”, which literally means “good news”.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord Acts 3:19 (NIV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

Water Baptism

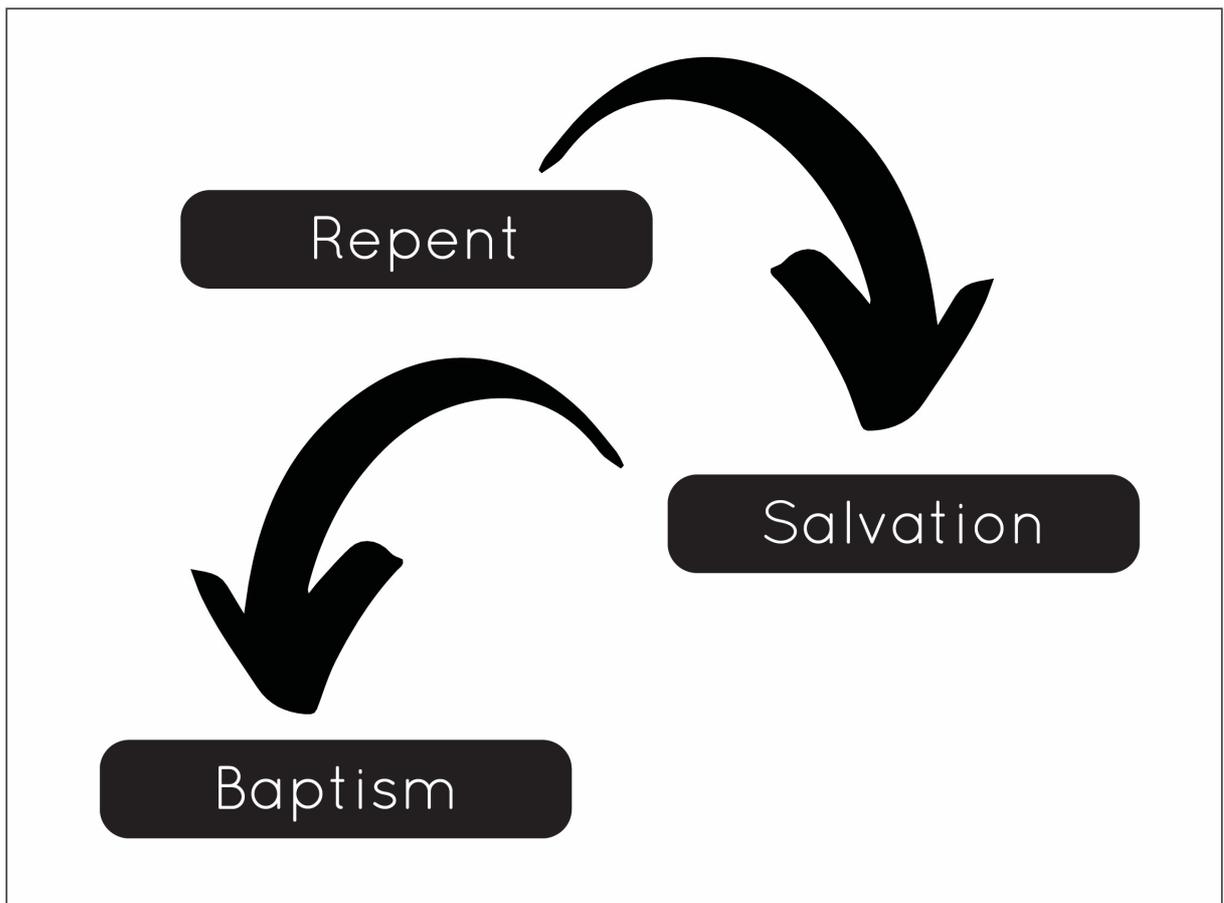
Salvation and baptism walk hand in hand too. One is not complete without the other. We are saved by repentance and faith in God, not baptism (Luke 23:39- 43). However, the logical and Biblical outflow of our salvation needs to start with baptism.

Repent and be baptised, every one of you. Acts 2:38 (NIV)

Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16 (NIV)

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1:4 (NIV)

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43 (NIV)



CHAPTER 2

THE SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM

Baptism is not merely symbolic, but the symbolism of baptism holds powerful truths for us as Christians. To an outside observer, dunking someone underwater might seem insignificant, even foolish. However, we need to understand why God chose for all His followers to go through this mysterious process. Understanding the powerful picture baptism portrays will help you to grow immensely in your walk with God.

The Symbolism of Death

It's important for every Christian to grasp the significance of Jesus' death on the cross. It was no mere accident. God planned for it to happen and Jesus chose to do it, even though He found it extremely difficult. He did so because human beings deserve to die and go to hell as a penalty for their sins (yes, all of us have sinned against God). Jesus, the only perfect person to ever walk this earth, chose to take our sin upon Himself and to die in our stead. Therefore, those who turn to Him are forgiven and the power of sin is broken.

Therefore, we need to see it this way: Jesus died so that we could “die” to our old selves.

For we know that our old self was crucified with [Jesus] so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Romans 6:6-7 (NIV)

Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NLT)

The Symbolism of Resurrection

Not only did Jesus die, but He was also resurrected into new life. In doing so, He proved that He was not only human, but also God. Death would not have the final say, but God the Father would raise Jesus from the dead. In that same way, we as Christians not only die to our old lives, but are resurrected into new life, in which God changes us from the inside out through the work of salvation.

Therefore, we need to see it this way: Jesus was resurrected so that we could also be “resurrected” and made new.

He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God. Romans 4:25 (NLT)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Jesus died so that we could “die”. Jesus was resurrected so that we could be “resurrected”.

The Symbolism of Baptism: Death and Resurrection

To sum it up, baptism symbolises both Jesus' and our own death and resurrection. When you became a Christian, you “died” and you were “resurrected”. This was a work done in your heart, so it was firstly an inward work. Baptism shows symbolically what happened in your heart when you got saved. It is therefore an outward declaration of an inward truth.

The act of going down into the water during baptism represents the death of your old life. Then, the act of being pulled out of the water symbolises your resurrection into new life. It mimics the way Jesus went into the grave (when you go under the water) and how He was resurrected by the power of the Father and came out of the grave (when you are pulled out of the water) with a new life.

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:4 (NIV)

having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. Colossians 2:12 (NIV)

for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Galatians 3:27 (NIV)

CHAPTER 3

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

Baptism is more than merely symbolic. Being baptised is a catalytic act of faith with the power to catapult us forward in our walk with God.

Baptism Reminds Us of Our Salvation

We are not saved by baptism per se, but baptism can be a powerful reminder of our salvation. Salvation, which starts as a work in our hearts, can at times feel very subjective. All Christians will go through times of doubt, and might even wonder whether this subjective work in our hearts really took place. Baptism, on the other hand, is a physical act which reminds us of what happened in our hearts. If we ever doubt, we can look back at this special event and remind ourselves that we were baptised – we were saved!

and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. 1 Peter 3:21 (NIV)

Baptism Breaks the Power of Sin

Many of the Old Testament stories are what the Bible calls "shadows" of what would happen in the New Testament. A shadow points us to the real thing. It's because of this that we see the entire Bible not only leading up to the coming of Jesus, but also giving us hints of what life after the death and resurrection of Jesus would be like. Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, appeared to some of His disciples and "*explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself*" (Luke 24:27, NIV). The entire Bible is about Jesus.

One of the major shadows in the Old Testament that gives us a hint of the power that baptism holds for believers is in the book of Exodus, when God sends Moses (a shadow of Jesus) to His chosen people, who were held captive by the Egyptians (a shadow of this sinful world). God works miracles through Moses, and finally salvation comes to the people of God as they are set free from Egypt and start making their way to the "promised land" (heaven).

However, there's a plot twist. Although salvation has come to God's people, the Egyptians don't want to completely let go, so they follow God's people into the desert. In other words, "sin" and "the world" do not want to leave them alone...sound familiar? Thankfully, God was (and still is) in control, and He opens the Red Sea for His people to pass through. As they pass through the water (a picture of baptism), Egypt follows them. God then closes the ocean just as His people come out the other side, crushing the Egyptians and stopping their efforts to take His people captive again. That's what God does through baptism: He breaks the power of sin over our lives, making it easier for us to follow Him!

Sure, we will always have to battle sin, just like the Israelites had to fight the temptation to return to Egypt. The difference now is that we are not under the control of Pharaoh (the devil/sin) anymore, but rather under Moses (Christ).

So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side! Then the Egyptians – all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and charioteers – chased them into the middle of the sea. But just before dawn the Lord looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw their forces into total confusion. He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. “Let’s get out of here – away from these Israelites!” the Egyptians shouted. “The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!” When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the Lord said to Moses, “Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers.” So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the Lord swept them into the sea. Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers – the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived. Exodus 14:22-28 (NLT)

I don’t want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptised as followers of Moses. 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 (NLT)

CHAPTER 4

SOME FAQs

Who Should be Baptised?

If you're a follower of Jesus, you should be baptised. There are several instances in the Bible that point us to the types of people who should get baptised. Here are a couple of questions you could ask yourself. If the answers are 'yes' and you haven't been baptised, then start getting your towel ready.

Questions to Consider

Do you believe the Good News about Jesus Christ?

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Acts 8:12 (ESV)

Have you accepted the Gospel message as truth?

Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. Acts 2:41 (NIV)

Have you repented of your sins and turned to God for salvation?

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:37-38 (NIV)

Are you a disciple (follower) of Jesus with a desire to keep walking with Him?

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

Being Re-Baptised

It's understandable if you reach this point in the booklet and have some questions, such as: what about those who were baptised as infants and now want to be baptised as adults? What about people who have been Christians for a long time but have backslidden and, having returned to God, wonder whether it's okay to be baptised again?

In this section, I will attempt to give a very basic explanation to help those who desire to be baptised but are unsure whether Scripture permits them to do so. For a more detailed stance on the topic of Infant Baptism, please refer to Chapter 6 of this document (Infant Baptism vs Believers' Baptism).

The Biblical Pattern: Salvation Then Baptism

Whether you were baptised as an infant or as an adult (who has subsequently backslidden), the Biblical answer to re-baptism remains the same. It has to do with the order of salvation and baptism in Scripture.

In the Bible, baptism is always preceded by an account of someone getting saved. It's never the other way around. Thus, the only question you should be asking is whether you were saved when you got baptised. If yes, there's no need to be baptised again. The solution for backsliding after salvation is repentance, not re-baptism. If the answer is no (that you weren't saved when you got baptised), then you might strongly want to consider taking the plunge again.

The question of whether or not you were saved when you got baptised as an infant should be easy to answer. People complicate the matter by doing what I call "theological gymnastics" by twisting Scripture to suit their own preconceived ideas, which is a big mistake. Keep it simple and ask yourself whether it's possible for a baby to believe in his/her heart, confess with his/her mouth and so be saved, as Romans 10:9 teaches.

Knowing whether or not you were saved when you got baptised as an adult, especially if there was little to no evidence of salvation in your life, can be a complicated question to answer. I would encourage you to bring it before the Lord and even your church leaders. If there's the slightest bit of doubt, I would urge you to rather be baptised again. Just make sure that you are truly saved before doing so.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:37-38 (NIV)

Who Can Perform Baptisms?

The Bible never teaches that only full-time church leaders can baptise others. The only Biblical prerequisite is that whoever baptises you is a follower of Jesus who has been baptised.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

Affirming this, respected theologian Wayne Grudem notes, "...there seems to be no need in principle to restrict the right to perform baptism only to ordained clergy" (Systematic Theology, 983-84). Rather, he says, Scripture permits all "mature believers to baptise new converts."

When Should Someone Be Baptised?

If you are a Christian, the first command given to you by God is to be baptised. There is no need to wait. Jesus should not only be our Saviour but also our Lord. Since He is our Lord, we are to obey His commands, even when we find them daunting or difficult to understand.

If you love me [Jesus], keep my commands. John 14:15 (NIV)

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name. Acts 22:16 (NIV)

How Should Someone Be Baptised?

The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) means to plunge, submerge or immerse. We do not see the sprinkling of water as a Biblical form of baptism. If there is enough water available, the Bible teaches that we should be fully submerged under water.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Acts 8:36-39 (NIV)

CHAPTER 5

COMMON BAPTISM OBJECTIONS

There are many reasons why people withhold from being baptised. However, as followers of Christ, we cannot afford to miss out on this incredible command given to us. By neglecting baptism, we rob ourselves of a closer walk with God. That said, let's look at a few reasons people often give for not being baptised, as well as a Biblical response to each.

“I'm waiting for God to speak to me”

As modern-day Christians, we have the wonderful privilege of the Bible being freely available to us. The Bible is God's infallible Word that instructs us for daily living. Although God speaks in other ways too, He never speaks outside of the boundaries laid down in Scripture. He will never ask us to do something that Scripture speaks against. He will also never ask us not to do something that the Bible clearly teaches us to do. The same applies to baptism: the Bible teaches it, so we need to do it.

Don't wait for a voice from heaven. Pick up your Bible, read it and obey.

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name. Acts 22:16 (NIV)

“I want to be baptised at a special place or by a specific person”

There is nothing wrong with wanting someone specific to baptise you, or with having a desire to be baptised at a special place. However, if this is at the expense of being obedient to God, then rather lay down your desires. If you have been convinced, through the Bible and this booklet, that you need to be baptised, then you shouldn't wait too long. God does not want us to delay carrying out His will for our lives.

So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptised? Acts 8:35-36 (NLT)

“I don't feel like a good enough Christian to be baptised”

There is such good news for you - you are not good enough! None of us are! That is exactly why Jesus came to die on the cross. If you are a born-again Christian with a desire to serve God for the rest of your life, even though you find it difficult, then go ahead and be baptised.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

“My family would not approve of me getting baptised”

Honouring your parents is something the Bible places great emphasis on. However, this should never be done at the expense of obeying God. We are to obey God before people.

The best way to understand how this works is by looking at what the Bible teaches regarding Christians obeying government. The Word of God is clear that we are to submit to our governing authority, even when we don't agree with them.

Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. Romans 13:1-2 (NLT)

However, this all changes when those governing authorities ask us to do anything that is outside the will of God, as taught in the Bible. It is at this point that we as Christians need to stand firm and place obedience to God as the higher command.

The early disciples were faced with such a situation when the governing authorities commanded them not to preach about Jesus. Although they knew that obeying authority was the right thing to do, they could not do so, because it would have caused them to disobey God. Note their response:

But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than any human authority.” Acts 5:29 (NLT)

The same applies when it comes to honouring our families, especially our parents. As far as possible, God expects us to honour and obey them. If, however, we are commanded by God to do something else (such as baptism), then we need to obey God rather than our parents.

This can still be done in a respectful manner, and I would advise that you try and explain your reasoning to them. They might just understand and even come to support your decision. Consider giving them this booklet to read if they have questions that need to be answered.

CHAPTER 6

INFANT BAPTISM VS BELIEVERS' BAPTISM

A plain reading of the Scriptures should, I believe, lead each person to the same basic conclusion regarding baptism. It is not a complicated matter, and I urge every Christian to read through the Bible and allow the Scriptures to form their conviction on this important topic.

What makes this matter somewhat more complicated is that many churches, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, hold a different view to the one expounded in this booklet. In theological terms, this booklet holds to **credo-baptism** – the understanding that believers are baptised upon their confession of faith. The age of the person being baptised is not really in question, as long as they are able to confess faith in Jesus Christ and bear the fruits of repentance. This is also called 'Believers' Baptism'. The alternate teaching is that of **paedo-baptism** – the belief that the children of Christians are to be baptised as babies. I believe that this teaching is not only unbiblical, but also dangerous. This is also called 'Infant Baptism'.

It is worth noting some differences in beliefs within the Infant Baptism camp: Roman Catholicism believes that upon baptising an infant, righteousness (salvation) is imputed. This means that, in their opinion, salvation takes place when a baby gets baptised. This stands in stark contrast to the Gospel of the Bible. It is extremely dangerous, as it promotes self-righteousness, or the belief that we are able to attain right standing before God by our own good works – in this case, by being baptised. This spits in the face of Jesus and the very dear price He paid for us on the cross.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (ESV)

Protestant churches that hold to Infant Baptism (like Anglicans, Lutherans, Dutch Reformed etc.) hold a somewhat different view. Most of them believe that Infant Baptism is a sign of our covenant with God and is thus not salvific in nature. According to this belief, new Christians are baptised as adults, whereas those born from members of the church are baptised as infants. They teach that baptism replaces the physical sign of circumcision (more on this later), but does not earn us salvation. In that sense, they rightly hold that it is faith in Jesus Christ that saves and not baptism. Although closer to the view held by this booklet, it is still not a view that holds much sway when measured against the Word of God.

The Arguments for Infant Baptism

In this section, I aim to accurately represent the beliefs held by Infant Baptism proponents while trying not to go into too much detail for the sake of brevity. There are three main arguments for Infant Baptism. I will list them here and then give a Biblical response to each.

Circumcision was Replaced by Baptism

Those holding to this view believe that (based on Colossians 2:11-12 and Acts 2:39) baptism replaces circumcision. In the Old Covenant, an infant was circumcised when they were eight days old. In the New Covenant (they say), one is baptised as an infant. The biological age of occurrence stays more or less the same, but the one is replaced by the other.

This argument hinges on the age at which baptism takes place. As was just mentioned, Infant Baptism proponents believe that baptism needs to take place at around 8 days after the birth of a child. For them, this is when one becomes part of the family of God. They view Christians in a similar light to the Jews of the Old Testament, whereby if the child's parents are Christians, then that child is born into the family of God. Thus, the child's physical birth determines the age at which they are inaugurated into the Christian family. They don't have a say in the matter, just as Jewish children don't have a say in being born Jewish.

However, one's biological age does not appear to be a determining factor anymore, now that we are under the New Covenant. What determines one's inauguration into God's family is no longer biological but spiritual birth. Under the Old Covenant, one was born physically into God's family as a Jew. Under the New Covenant, a person is born spiritually into God's family when they become a Christian. We could agree, then, that baptism should take place as soon as a person has entered into the family of God. However, Scripture leads us to believe that this happens when a person places their faith in Christ (and is born again spiritually) and not when they are biologically born.

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." John 3:3 (NIV)

Moreover, nowhere does the Bible explicitly teach that circumcision is replaced by something else. Rather, it seems that it is abolished, and Gentiles are taught that circumcision of the heart is what truly matters.

Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. 1 Corinthians 7:18-19 (NIV)

"Households" Were Baptised in The New Testament

Infant Baptism proponents are also careful to note that about a quarter of all the baptisms recorded in the New Testament were not individual baptisms, but that entire households were baptised. They say that this *"strongly suggests, though it does not prove, that infants were among those baptised"* (Sproul 41:S2).

We do know that "households" in the New Testament was a very broad term, and referred to the husband, wife and children, but also slaves, other unmarried family members and even business partners. It is therefore possible that infants were among those getting baptised. That being said, we cannot base our theology on assumption. If we do, we get ourselves into dangerous territory. If we take the rest of the Bible into account, it is more probable that all those in the "household" also responded to the Gospel message and got saved before they were baptised.

Let's look at one of these instances as an example:

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptised. Acts 16:31-33 (NIV)

Note that the Gospel was preached not only to the main character, the jailor, but to the entire household. They all had a chance to respond.

History Teaches that Early Christians Baptised Infants

Paedo-Baptists teach that *"the first direct mention of infant baptism is around the middle of the second century A.D."*. They explain that *"what is noteworthy about this reference is that it assumes infant baptism to be the universal practice of the church"* (Sproul 42:S2).

Although early church history gives us insight into how the Bible was applied by those living closest to the life of Jesus' earthly ministry, it is by no means authoritative in setting doctrine. It is also equally valid to say that it didn't take long for much of the church to drift away from the teachings of Scripture. In the book of Revelation, the risen Jesus speaks through the apostle John. He addresses seven of the earliest-known Christian churches in history. These letters were written long before the second century A.D., and even then, Jesus sharply rebukes some of these churches, stating that He has even left some of them. We cannot, therefore, in good conscience, use church history to justify theology unless our theology is properly rooted in the Bible. Our stance as Christians should always be that the Bible primarily sets our doctrine.

Orthodoxy, or the common view held throughout church history, should be open to being challenged if there is a strong Biblical basis for the challenge. Infant Baptism is not the only orthodox view held throughout church history, but even if it were, there is enough in the Bible to strongly oppose it. Stating that *"the New Testament neither explicitly commands infants to be baptised nor explicitly prohibits them from being baptised"* (Sproul 42:S2) is no way of letting the Bible dictate our theology, especially when there is such a strong Biblical argument for Believers' Baptism.

The Arguments for Believers' Baptism

The theology of baptism does not need to be overly complicated. The Bible is clear on the matter, and our best response would be to obey God rather than to look for reasons and arguments to justify our disobedience. The moment you need to start doing "theological gymnastics" to understand something that is quite clear in Scripture, red flags need to go up. Let's look at a few of the arguments for Believers' Baptism.

The Means of Salvation According to the Bible: Faith, Not Baptism

We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Baptism, and especially Infant Baptism, is not a means of salvation. The notion that salvation comes by baptism, although it is not taught by all paedo-Baptists, is one that can easily creep into this way of thinking. However, knowing that salvation only happens by faith, it would seem that the logical conclusion is to be baptised after salvation.

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Romans 3:28 (NIV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)

The Biblical Pattern: Salvation Then Baptism

As previously mentioned, there is a clear pattern that emerges as one looks at all the passages in the New Testament relating to baptism. First comes salvation, then comes baptism. It is never the other way around and there is no instance in the Bible where we see anyone being baptised before they get saved.

It is because of this pattern that Believers' Baptism is not called Adult Baptism. Age is not a determining factor. All that matters is faith. If a child is able to declare their faith in Christ, then they are permitted to be baptised.

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 (NIV)

The Example Set by Jesus

The example set by Jesus, who was baptised even though He had been circumcised as a Jew, is probably one of the strongest arguments for Believers' Baptism. The same goes for the fact that the early church was originally only made up of Jews who were baptised when they became believers in Christ.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. Matthew 3:16 (NIV)

When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” Luke 3:21-22 (NIV)

CHAPTER 7

BAPTISM ON THE DAY

There are several practical things to keep in mind when planning for your baptism. If you would like to be baptised, then speak to one of your spiritual leaders and ask if you can set a date for this special day as soon as possible.

When it comes to the finer details of the event, the Bible does not prescribe exactly where or how baptism should take place. Therefore, each church or leader might therefore have a specific preference with regards to a place, time or way in which they prefer to perform baptisms. Have a conversation with one of your leaders to find out more.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Invite friends and family. This is such a wonderful moment, so try to share it with those around you, if at all possible.
- If you would like someone specific to baptise you, then speak to your local leaders so that it can be arranged beforehand.
- Wear darker clothes to maintain modesty. Remember, you're going to be soaking wet with others watching, so put some thought into what you wear.
- Remember a towel. It might be a good idea to keep it near the area where you'll be baptised.
- When going under the water, keep your arms close to your body. Your natural response may be to lift your arms when getting baptised, but try and keep them close to your chest so that you can be fully submerged. Some people prefer closing their nose with their one hand.
- Consider asking a friend to take a photo or video if you are prayed for afterwards.
- Enjoy it! Take time to speak to God before and after your baptism. This is a special moment between you and your heavenly Father, so remember to take it in.

